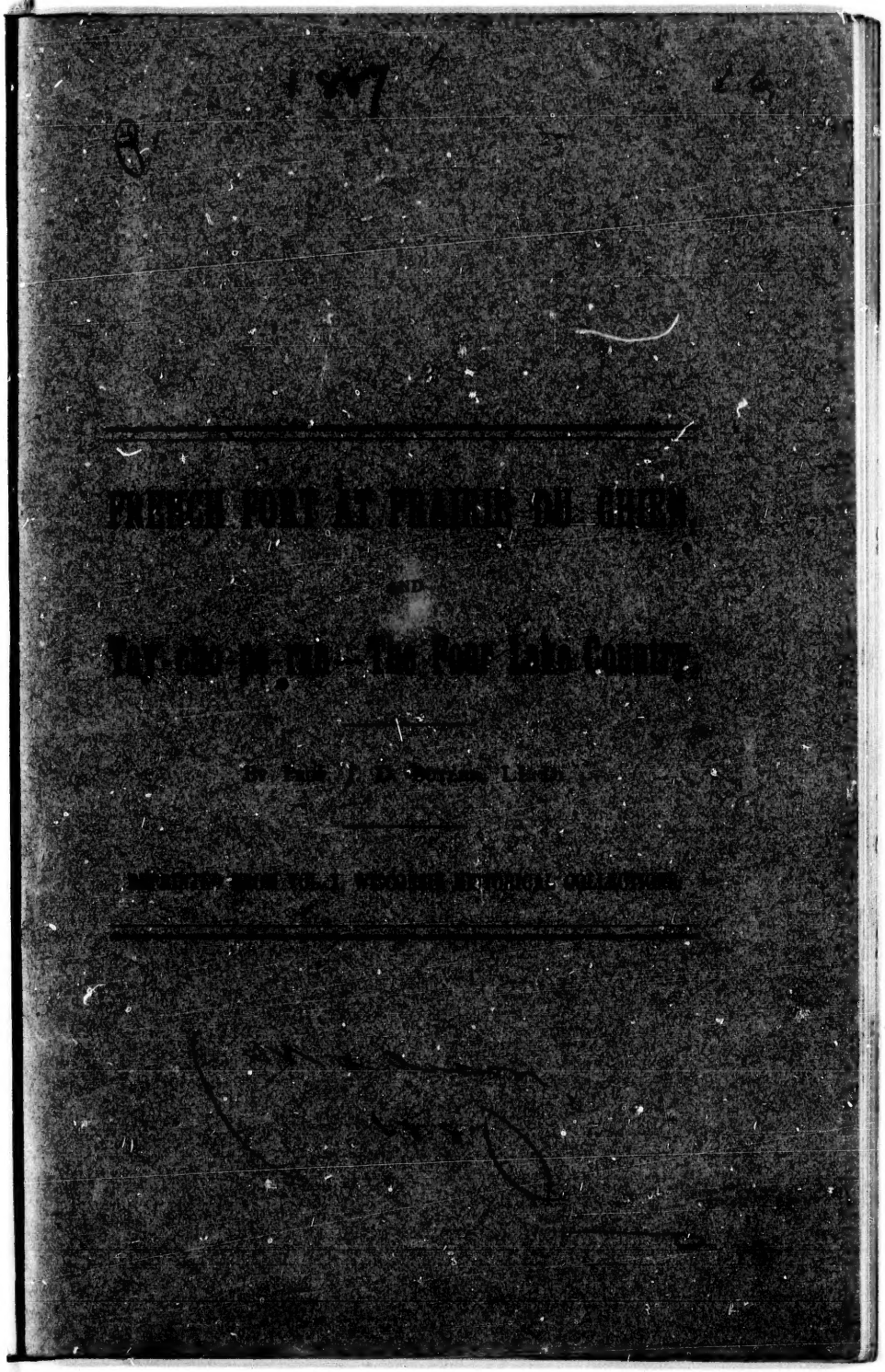

FRENCH FORT AT PRAIRIE DU CHIEN,

AND

Tay-cho-pe-rah---The Four Lake Country.

By Prof. J. D. Butler, LL.D.

REPRINTED FROM VOL. X, WISCONSIN HISTORICAL COLLECTIONS.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
CITY OF WASHINGTON.

F589
.P8B9

FRENCH FORTIFICATIONS NEAR THE MOUTH OF THE WISCONSIN. "HOLD THE FORT!"

BY PROF. JAMES D. BUTLER, LL. D.

A prominent historian of Wisconsin thus writes: "There was never within the boundaries of Crawford county a French military post of any kind, while France held dominion over this region. No traveler mentions any fortification there. No official French document has ever been discovered giving any account of any fort there. Yet as early as 1820, a map was published by the United States on which is delineated a famous fortification — huge walls with their salient projections, all shown as if some mighty military genius had planned its construction."[1]

Such is the language of a recent historian, who further declares belief in any French fort near Prairie du Chien to be "one of the mock pearls in Wisconsin history." Belief in such a post is dear to me as adding something to the length of our annals, and yet I would not hold to a delusion. The real existence, however, of at least one French military post, near the mouth of the Wisconsin, still seems to me pretty well proved.

The point was one where a stronghold would naturally be built. It was the northern limit of the Illinois tribes, and a starting point for raids against the Iroquois, who had establishments near Chicago.[2] It was the starting point for all expeditions,— either up, down or beyond the Mississippi. On

[1] History of Crawford county, Wisconsin, p. 329, edited by C. W. Butterfield, and a paper read before the Madison Literary Club by Mr. Butterfield. S. J. Clarke, the publisher of the History of Crawford county, disclaims any share or responsibility for the statements made by Mr. Butterfield.
L. C. D.

[2] La Potherie, ii, p. 132.

Jeffreys' map of 1776, a line is drawn from Prairie du Chien to Omaha, and inscribed "French route to the Western Indians."

In 1721, in a report to the British King from the Governor of Pennsylvania, it was mentioned as one of the three great routes from Canada to the Mississippi,[1] and in subsequent reports, it was remarked, that "since the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, 1748, the French had greatly increased the number of forts on the rivers which run into the Mississippi."[2]

Concerning Prairie du Chien, Captain Carver, who was there in 1766, thus writes:

"This town is a great mart, where tribes from the most remote branches of the Mississippi annually assemble, bringing with them their furs to dispose of to traders."

This traffic was even then no novelty. It had been going on there four score years before. As early as 1680, La Salle had purposed to send traders to that point.[3]

If, then, French forts were early built anywhere, one might well be looked for at such an emporium as early rose at the confluence of the Wisconsin and Mississippi. But in our primitive period forts abounded. They were common among Indians, even before the coming of the white men.[4]

La Salle on a march usually at night set a rude stockade about his camp.[5] In 1679, having to wait a few days on the St. Joseph for a party of his men, he built a fort at the mouth of the river.[6] In 1682, he built another fort near Memphis, on a bluff, where he halted only six days, and where he expected to make a still shorter sojourn.[7] Nor does his custom of rearing a stronghold wherever he stopped, appear to have been unusual among French pioneers.

Every trading-house was fortified so far as possible. Cadot's, at the Sault, is called a fort, by Carver. The estab-

[1] Colonial Records of New York, V, p. 621.
[2] Colonial History of New York, II, p. 608.
[3] Parkman, p. 262.
[4] La Potherie, II, p. 96; Parkman's La Salle, p. 266; Bradbury, Travels, 114.
[5] Parkman, 398.
[6] Idem, p. 149.
[7] Idem, p. 277.

lishment of Solomon Juneau, at Milwaukee, bore the same name. Witness a pioneer poem, which runs thus:

> "Juneau's palace of logs was a store and a fort,
> Though surrounded by neither a ditch nor a moat,
> For often this lonely and primitive place,
> Was sorely beset by that blood-thirsty race
> With whom Juneau had mercantile dealings."

Still better may the name fort have befitted the structure which must have arisen for such an *entrepot* as Prairie du Chien.

Marquette was a man of peace, but his mission-house was palisaded.[1] The Jesuits, though non-combatant black gowns, in general fortified their missions. They also taught the Indian how to improve his strongholds, by changing circles to squares, and adding flanking towers at the corners.[2] Thus improved aboriginal stockades were not a whit inferior to the Fort, at Prairie du Chien, as shown on the United States map of 1820.

The representation of the fort on that map, which has been derided by our anti-fort investigator, is a square with four smaller squares at its corners. This was the conventional sign or printer's mark for every military work without any reference to its magnitude.

That there was really a French fort near the junction of the Wisconsin with the Grand River, appears the more likely when we consider the *nature* of such posts. What was it? Lewis and Clark, on Sept. 22, 1804, came to what they call a French fort, almost due west of Prairie du Chien, and near Council Bluffs. In their notice of it they say: "The establishment is sixty or seventy feet square, picketed in with red cedar, with sentry-boxes at two of the angles. The pickets are thirteen and one-half feet above the ground." Soon afterwards, Pike, going up the Mississippi from Prairie du Chien, records that the fort at Sandy Lake was one hundred feet square, with two bastions pierced for small arms

[1] Parkman's La Salle, p. 49.
[2] Ibid., pp. 63, 99, 238; Parkman's Jesuits, page 398.
[3] Lewis & Clark's Travels, i, p. 100; Gass' Journal, p. 42.

— the pickets about one foot in diameter, and squared on the outside.[1]

It was no long labor to build such a defence. In 1727, the missionary, Father Guignas, voyaging up the Mississippi, passed Prairie du Chien, and made an establishment on the north shore of Lake Pepin. He wrote in his diary: "The day after landing we put our axes to the wood. On the fourth day following, the fort was entirely finished."[2]

On the thirteenth of March, 1682, La Salle's men, near the mouth of the Arkansas, "threw up a rude fort of felled trees in less than an hour."[3]

Lest it should be thought that Prairie du Chien is too far west for us to expect to discover a French fortification there, let it be noted that before 1724, Fort Orleans had been built hundreds of miles up the Missouri, near the mouth of Grand River.[4]

On the whole, every one familiar with the habits of French pioneers in the wide West, will admit that many forts must have been thrown up by them in emergencies, and then have perished without their names ever being put on record. "They had no poet, and they died."

Even in the absence of all evidence then, it would appear a bold assertion that there was never any French military post near the mouth of the Wisconsin, unless "some official French document can be discovered giving an account of such work, or some traveler mentions it."

But is all evidence of a French fort at Prairie du Chien lacking? By no means.

In the *American State Papers* regarding Public Lands[5] we read that on February 25th, 1818, Hon. George Robertson, from the Committee on Public Lands, reported to the House of Representatives, that "in the year 1755 the Gov-

[1] Pike's Travels, App. p. 38.

[2] Shea's *Early Voyages Up and Down the Mississippi*, p. 172.

[3] Parkman's *La Salle*, 278.

[4] Davis & Durrie's *Hist. Missouri*, pp. 11–12; Dr. John Mitchell's *Contest in America*, p. 196.

[5] Vol. iii, p. 341.

ernment of France established a military post near the mouth of the Wisconsin."

The report to Congress was based on information given by a Government agent who had visited Prairie du Chien, and gathered up testimony on the spot. According to the oldest inhabitants, some of whom had resided there well nigh from the close of the Revolutionary war, it was only during that contest that the French fort was burned.

It is argued by our sceptical annalist that this fort was an ordinary log house. It seems to me more properly named a fort. It was so named by almost everybody known to have been acquainted with those who had seen it. Among its stores were no less than three hundred and sixty bales of fur, and as a rule every fur factory was fortified. It was defended by a body of armed men, as forts are wont to be.

But, says our skeptic, it was built on the site of a pre-historic fort, and the works of mound-builders passed for those of the French. Such a site was fitly preferred, and such works became French when used as foundations by the French, and incorporated into works of their own. Baptize an old Jupiter, and he becomes Jew Peter straight-way.

Early tradition at Prairie du Chien reported a French fort burned there. Skeptics concerning the existence of such a fort hold that this tradition grew out of the burning of a certain log house there. But there is no evidence that the house in question was burned at all. Their only witness in the matter simply says that certain bales of fur which had been stored there were burned. The store-house was occupied by friends of those who are supposed to have set it on fire. Such an incendiary supposition is unreasonable. Or the log-house may have been fortified, and so styled a fort.

J. Long, traveling in 1778, north of Lake Superior, says: "The house of Shaw, a trader on Lake Manontoye, might very properly be styled a fort, being secured by high pickets."[1]

But evidence is at hand of French forts near Prairie du Chien before 1755.

---

[1] Long's Travels, p. 65.

Early in the eighteenth century, the Indians of the North-West, as the Canadian Colonial Company were informed, were endeavoring to open commerce with the English on the lower Mississippi. Thus the directors of this Company were led in 1701 to dispatch agents to Callieres, the Canadian Governor, in Montreal, with a plan to thwart this trade. This plan consisted in establishing posts at the mouth of the Ohio, on the Wisconsin, and further up the Mississippi among the Sioux. It was argued, that if the Indians found in these places something to satisfy their needs, and the French whom they loved, they would abandon the thought of going among strangers. The necessity and usefulness of such establishments were clear to the Governor, and though he felt forbidden by a royal order to license their organization, yet he declared some such measure to be urgently demanded, and the authorities in France were so informed.[1]

They may have followed his advice. But there is reason to think that even before the opening of the eighteenth century, forts had been erected by the French, near Prairie du Chien.

Regarding an earlier post there, one of my authorities is La Potherie, who, before the year 1702, had completed a work in four volumes concerning New France. The portion concerning Canada he wrote first, and that from personal knowledge, and desired to penetrate six hundred leagues into the interior. "Lacking health and leisure for such an enterprise, he made the most careful inquiries," as the missionary Bobe, his contemporary, testifies "from the Indian chiefs who came from all quarters to Montreal to dispose of their furs, and was informed about whatever he relates with the utmost accuracy and thoroughness, by Nicholas Perrot, who, for more than forty years before, had been the principal actor in all that had taken place among the aborigines of the Far West[2].

The narrative of La Potherie is that [in 1685?[3]] the Mi-

[1] Margry, V., pp. 175, 362.
[2] La Potherie, iv., p. 268.
[3] Tailhan, p. 303.

amis, whose villages lay a few leagues below the mouth of the Wisconsin, came, forty strong, to Green Bay where Nicholas Perrot had arrived as Governor of the North-West. "They begged him to set up his establishment on the Mississippi, and near the Wisconsin, in order that they could sell their furs there[1].

For gaining his consent they brought him presents, a beautiful specimen of lead from their region,—and each of the forty gave him four beaver skins[2].

The Miamis had undertaken this embassy because they had previously been forced to sell peltry cheap, and pay dear for French goods to the Pottawatomies, who had hitherto been their middle men. The result was that Perrot agreed to establish himself—within twenty days—just where they desired him—a little below the Wisconsin.[3] In accordance with this promise, "the establishment of Perrot was made below the Wisconsin, in a situation very strong against the assaults of neighboring tribes."[4]

The fact that the establishment of Perrot was "fixed in a situation that was very strong against the assaults of neighboring tribes," indicates that it stood in a dangerous place, and that, therefore, it must have been fortified. When we expect a burglar, we bar the door.

At this post, six sub-tribes of the Miamis gathered when the ice in the rivers would bear them, and made a treaty with Perrot. That officer was soon called north near the Chippewa River, and played the part of grand pacificator between the Sioux and more southern tribes. He returned to his southern establishment, gave orders to other tribes who were waiting for him there, and he also discovered and tested the lead mine, twenty leagues below which for ages after was called by his name.[5]

---

[1] Vol. II, p. 251.

[2] La Potherie, ii, 260.

[3] On leur promit de s'établir dans vingt jours au dessous de la riviere d'Ouiskonche.

[4] L'etablissement de Perrot se fit au dessous d'Ouiskonche, dans une situation fort avanteuse contre les insults des nations voisines.—La Potherie ii, p. 260.

[5] La Potherie, ii, p. 270.

Again, the mouth of the Wisconsin was the point where he agreed to meet different tribes in the month when a truce he had made between them would expire. This place was his strategic base of operations, launching the northern tribes against the southern Iroquois.

It would not be strange if no further notice should occur in Perrot's career of his post at the mouth of the Wisconsin; for that officer, soon after the council, was transferred to a post on the Marameg, on the east of Lake Michigan,[1] between the Black and Grand Rivers.

It so happens that Perrot's post on the Wisconsin, in the narrative of La Potherie, is called "establishment," and not fort. Yet it was no doubt fortified, not only as all trading factories were wont to be, but more strongly than some others, being of special military as well as commercial importance. Moreover, the word "establishment" as used by La Potherie to describe Perrot's Wisconsin post, is explained by Perrot's French editor, Tailhan, to mean fort. Concerning Perrot's return from the land of the Sioux to the mouth of the Wisconsin, Tailhan says, that returning "from his old fort he regained the *fort* which he had recently erected."[2] The old fort of Perrot, and even the post on Starved Rock — the Illinois Gibraltar — are each also called by La Potherie an "establishment." The phrases already quoted from La Potherie, that the establishment of Perrot "was in a very advantageous situation as against the attacks of neighboring tribes," is also a proof that it was a fortified post.

The early existence of a fort near the mouth of the Wisconsin, is further attested by early maps. At that point we read the words *Fort St. Nicholas* inscribed on the map prepared in 1688 by J. B. Franquelin for presentation to the French King. This work, made in Quebec by the King's hydrographer, was certified by the contemporary Canadian Governor as "very correct," and is pronounced by Parkman the most remarkable of all the early maps of the interior of

[1] Perrot, 276; Tailhan, 328.

[2] De Son ancien fort Perrot regagna le fort, qu' il avait récemment élevé. See Perrot, p. 328.

North America.[3] Why should we reject its testimony,— especially after observing it to be in keeping with the history of La Potherie, which was indubitably based on conversations with Perrot himself? What name would Perrot have been more likely to bestow on his fort than that of his patron saint, which was Nicholas?

[3] The title of the map is: *Carte de l'Amerique Septentrionale dressée par J. B. Franquelin dans* 1688 *pour être presentée a Louis XIV.*

No map-maker was ever more eminent than the Frenchman D'Anville (1697–1782.) He is credited by the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "with a complete geographical reform—banishing the custom of copying blindly from preceding maps, and never fixing a single position without a careful examination of all authorities. By this process he detected many serious errors in the works of his most celebrated predecessors, while his own accuracy was soon attested by travelers and mariners who had taken his works as their guide. His principles also led him to another innovation, which was that of omitting every name for which there existed no sufficient authority. Vast spaces which had before been covered with cities, were thus suddenly reduced to a perfect blank,—but it was speedily perceived that this was the only accurate course."

Reading these words, and a still higher eulogy of D'Anville in Gibbon, I was eager to inspect his large map of our Northwest, published in November, 1755. On looking at the mouth of the Wisconsin, as there delineated, I read words which I cannot but translate *Old French Fort of St. Nicholas*—"Ancien Fort Francais de S. Nicholas."[1]

In 1755, M. Bellin published at Paris "*Remarks on a map of North America, between the 28th and the 72nd degrees of latitude, and a Geographical Description of those Regions.*"[1] One of his remarks is in these words: "Nicholas Perrot built a fort named St. Nicholas at the mouth of the Wiscon-

[1] *Remarques sur la carte de l' Amerique Septentrionale comprise entre le 28e et le 72e degré de Latitude, avec une Description Geographique de ces parties.* 4to Paris, 1755, pp. 131. Didot. This map is in the Library of Harvard University.

sin." Two years later at that point the Amsterdam Atlas of Covens and Mortier shows the words *Ancien Fort.*[1]

In addition to what has been adduced from La Potherie and Franquelin, the testimony of a noted English map-maker should be considered. In 1762, a map entitled "*Canada and the northern part of Louisiana,* by Thomas Jeffreys, geographer to his Majesty" [George III.] was published. On this map, at the confluence of the Wisconsin and Mississippi, we read these words: "*Fort St. Nicholas destroyed.*" Again, in the Geography published by Bankes in London about a century ago, a folio of 992 pages, in a map opposite page 464, I find at the mouth of the Wisconsin the words "Fort St. Nicolas." There is never much smoke without fire, and it is hard to hold the witness of so many a map to be all lies made out of whole cloth.

The considerations which have now been presented may be strongly re-enforced by local traditions and ruins, but they seem to need no confirmation. If they do not enable us to hold fast our faith in any French fort whatever near Prairie du Chien, we must, if consistent, become as skeptical regarding most of our early history as agnostics are regarding religion. I say, then — "Hold the fort! Why not hold the fort?"[2]

[1] Ms. letter of Judge C. C. Baldwin, of the Western Reserve Historical Society.

[2] Thus good historical authorities point out the establishment of Perrot's Fort St. Nicholas, in 1685, just above the mouth of the Wisconsin, according to Franquelin and D'Arville, or just below, according to La Potherie. It had, very likely, but a brief existence. Another fort was established in 1755, at what is called the Lower Town of Prairie du Chien, the particular locality of which is designated in volume ninth of the *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, pp. 286-91. It may be added, that Dr. Neill, one of the very ablest historical investigators in the North-West, locates Perrot's establishment of 1685, "at Prairie du Chien"— *Hist. Minnesota,* fourth revised edition, 1882, p. 799. L. C. D.

TAY-CHO-PE-RAH—THE FOUR LAKE COUNTRY—FIRST WHITE FOOT-PRINTS THERE.

By Prof. James D. BUTLER, L. L. D.

The first mention of the name Tay-cho-pe-rah in print which I have been able to discover, dates from 1837. In May of that year, the English traveler, Featherstonhaugh, was shown in Mineral Point, a plan of seven paper cities situated, in his own words, "near Ty-cho-be-rah" [he omits the letter *a* before *y*.] "or the Four Lakes." The conjunction *or* is ambiguous. It may imply either that Four Lakes is a translation of the word Tay-cho-pe-rah, or that is another name of a different signification. It happens to be in my power to remove this ambiguity.

I was informed both that Tay-cho-pe-rah was the collective Indian name for the Four Lakes, and that the name itself also signifies Four Lakes, by Gov. Doty in person, and he was on their shores earlier than any other pioneer of our race save one or two.

But was not Gov. Doty mistaken? Several of our oldest settlers and explorers, notably Messrs. Moses M. Strong, Darwin Clark, and G. P. Delaplaine, as well as Jefferson Davis, never heard the name Tay-cho-pe-rah; and when a witness testified that he saw an Irishman steal a pig, Paddy thought it a good defence to produce two witnesses ready to testify that they did not see him steal the pig.

The statement of Governor Doty, however, tallies with the independent testimony of William Deviese, and of Morgan L. Martin in a recent letter, in which it is also added that the name Tay-cho-pe-rah is a Winnebago word. It is also in keeping with the memory of Simeon Mills, that at the time of his arrival in Madison the region was called by natives Tay-shope. No further witness was needed, and yet I was eager for more—at least, for ascertaining what

part of the word Tay-cho-pe-rah signifies *lake*, and what part *four*. With this view I wrote half a dozen letters, and looked through more volumes in vain; but have at last found what I sought in Gallatin's *Synopsis of the Indian Tribes*. In that work, the Winnebago stands number thirty-three in a synoptical table of leading words in some three score aboriginal tongues; and the Winnebago name for lake is *tah-hah*,[1] and the name for four is *tshopiwi*. These elements readily combine in Tay-cho-pe-rah.

Gallatin's book was written half a century ago, and his authority was a Winnebago vocabulary in the Washington War Office, which had been sent thither by an Indian agent named Nicholas Boilvin.[2] We must secure a complete copy of that vocabulary, if extant, which has never been published. Printed in our *Historical Collections*, it will prove a monument more lasting than brass or marble, of the race who here preceded us. It will also be more significant. Language, a bond lighter than air, is yet stronger than iron to draw the earliest ages into acquaintance and communion with the latest.

Next to indifference to aboriginal language, I now regret my neglect of their legends, but have saved one of them. It is an odd Winnebago myth, told by one of the tribe in 1885, which had its local habitation on Fourth Lake. Many centuries ago two Winnebagoes, near the ford of the Catfish, noticed the track of a coon which they followed. It led them to the cliff, for many years called McBride's Point, and now known as Maple Bluff. It led them to a hollow tree on that promontory. In the tree they discovered a catfish which they had caught. One of the Indians, moved by some superstitious scruple, refused to eat the fish; but the

[1] p. 334.

[2] Boilvin became Indian agent at Prairie du Chien before 1814, and continued so until his death in 1824. *Hist. Coll.* II., 122; III., 273; IX., 286. We owe his list of Winnebago words to Humboldt, who urged the importance of such collections in a letter to Gallatin. Gallatin induced the Secretary of War to order Indian agents to send such vocabularies to Washington. Inquiries at Washington thus far fail to discover this precious vocabulary of Boilvin.

other, being very hungry, made a hearty meal on his capture,—indeed, devoured it altogether. But his appetite was no sooner satisfied than he became fearfully thirsty. He betook himself to the springs; but the more he drank the more thirsty he grew. His agony became so intense that in desperation he waded into Fourth Lake. Then behold a new wonder! As soon as the water rose above his middle his thirst ceased, but returned the moment he ventured where the lake was more shallow. The truth was he had become a fishified man,—and was never known to draw near the shore again. Strange noises, however, heard on the bluff, were for ages regarded by the Red Men as made by their fishified brother—at mid-night beating his war drum in the deep water off Maple Bluff. The last of these nocturnal manifestations was coincident with the first settlement of whites in the Maple Grove.

How early the aboriginal name had been translated into Four Lakes by our pioneers, I can not ascertain. In 1817, the name "Four Lakes" was already in use. In that year, Maj. S. H. Long, in the midst of a voyage up the Mississippi, in a six-oared skiff, to the Falls of St. Anthony, writes, in a volume first published in 1860: "Rock river in high water is navigable about three hundred miles to what are called the Four Lakes." The name must then be older than 1817, albeit it is not set down on Melish's large map, five feet by three, of the year before. It is not unlikely that the word Four Lakes will turn out to be a translation of the old French name. Rock River certainly is, appearing on our old maps (1750) as *Riviere de la Roche*. Rock river was called by the Algonquins Sin-sepe, and by the Winnebagoes We-ro-sha-na-gra. Both these Indian terms have the same meaning with the English name. As the whites adopted an aboriginal name for the river, it is not unlikely that they obtained from the same source their collective name for the group of lakes on its head waters.

Although the name Four Lakes was mentioned by Long in 1817, it may not have been much used. In the minute account of his march in 1823, in a direct line from Chicago to Prairie du Chien, striking Rock River at the mouth of

the Cottonwood or Kishwaukee, Long says nothing about the Four Lakes.[1] Nor is the name mentioned by Morse, father of the telegraphic inventor, who in 1820 was at Prairie du Chien, and there heard from Law, an Indian trader, that the Rock River country abounded in small lakes, one of them called Koshkonong.

No one of the names by which we now designate the Four Lakes can be traced back any further than 1840. In that year Frank Hudson, a surveyor, suggested the names Mendota and Monona, the former being said to signify *great*, and the latter *beautiful*. These names appeared so proper that they soon came into common use. About six years later, Waubesa meaning *swan*, and Kegonsa meaning *fish*, were proposed by Lyman C. Draper. In 1855, on February 14th, a bill passed the Legislature, legalizing all these Four Lake names.

It is pleasant to know that the meanings assigned to the present names of the Four Lakes, rest, in part at least, on good authority. Mendota really signifies Great Lake in Dakota, a tongue of the same family with Winnebago. In the excellent Dakota dictionary by the Missionary Riggs, *mde* is the word for lake, and *ota* for great. The primitive meaning of *mde* is probably water, for the two elements when combined often mean a confluence. Thus the meeting of the St. Peter's river with the Mississippi, was called Mendota by the Dakotas.

The word Monona I have sought in a good many Indian vocabularies without success, yet I still trust Mr. Hudson had reason to say that its import is *beautiful*. No word whatever for beautiful was set down in the list of words which the Government agent among the Winnebagoes drew up by order of the War Department.[2]

In Chippewa, Wabese or Waubesie is the name of a swan, and Kigonsee, for fish in general. Dr. Draper's authority is

[1] Long's *Travels*, i, p.184.

[2] The best Winnebago scholar known to me, says that *Monona* in that tongue means *lost*, and then as things are so often lost through stealing, its chief meaning was stolen.

the *Miscellanies* of Col. De Peyster,[1] who was the British officer in command at Mackinaw in 1774 and five years after. This work was published anonymously, but the author wrote his name in a copy which he presented to Lady Dungannon, and which has been for more than thirty years treasured by Dr. Draper. One other copy of this work is known to be extant in America, and one abroad.

The United States survey of the Four Lakes was not executed till 1839. The officer who performed this work, Captain Cram, of the Engineers, speaks of them as then well known by the numbers of one, two, three and four. The official figures respecting Fourth Lake, are: Length, six miles, breadth four, area fifteen and sixty-five one-hundredths miles, circumference nineteen miles and one-fourth.

Five years before this date, the Government land survey took place, and the surveyor marked the lakes on his plot, "First, Second, Third and Fourth," as if their names were then, in 1834, as well established as that of Rock river itself. On Chandler's map, however, which was made in Galena, only five years earlier, in 1829, the lakes have no numbers, although there are several inscriptions about them, as "Fine farming land around these lakes," "Canoe portage two hundred yards," "Winnebago village," etc.

No record has met my eye as to why the numeration of the Four Lakes began from the south rather than from the north. Seeking for the reason may be thought as vain a search as that for the difference between tweedledum and tweedledee. Yet that reason seems to me clear. Exploration has usually been made by ascending rivers from their mouths and their peculiarities, if recurring in a series, are naturally classed in the order of discovery. Thus, on the Nile, the cataracts, as you go up that river, are numbered before you reach Khartoum from first to sixth. Accordingly, I am inclined to think the first English-speaking pioneers who came upon the Four Lakes, were acquainted with the custom of numbering up stream, and followed it, no matter from what quarter they had, in fact, approached

[1] Vol. 1, p. 274.

those waters. In 1829, a treaty was concluded with the Winnebagoes, in which the water now known as Fourth Lake is mentioned. It is called, however, "the most northern of the four lakes," as if it was not yet known by its number.

It is a pity that our pioneers designated the Four Lakes by numbers. If they had not, we should now know their original Indian names, and the meaning of those names. Dead Lake was not numbered, and so J. A. Noonan, a land-hunter here in 1837, heard its name as Wing a, and ascertained that Wingra means duck.[1] We may fairly conclude that but for usurping numbers Mr. Noonan would have heard the aboriginal appellations of all the Four Lakes, and would have transmitted them, as he did Wingra, to the art preservative of all arts.

The birth-year of Madison is commonly considered to have been 1837; but fully five years earlier, there was at least one house built here, and that by a French builder. In 1832, on the 15th of October, two deserters from Fort Winnebago were arrested near what we call Johnson street, at the trading-house of a Frenchman, Oliver Armel.

Armel's christian name is printed "Louis" in the books; but I write it Oliver on the authority of Simeon Mills. His testimony is more credible than any book, for he was the justice to whom Armel afterwards came for marriage, and he heard him called Oliver for years.[2]

Armel was in the Four Lake country at least as early as 1829. In August of that year, in passing Third Lake, he

---

[1] *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, vii, p. 410.

[2] In Dr. Chapman's sketch, *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, iv, 347, the name Louis Armel is given, followed by Durrie's, and Park's, Histories of Madison. In the treaty at Prairie du Chien, in 1829, thirty years before Dr. Chapman wrote, we find the orthography "Oliver Armell," whose two children, Catharine and Oliver, each received a section of land from the Winnebagoes — evidently because their mother was of that tribe. At the treaty with the Pottawotamies at Chicago, in Sept. 1833, a claim of $300 was allowed to "Oliver Emmell." De La Ronde, *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, VIII, 360, writes "Oliver Arimell;" and Noonan, in same volume, 410, has it "Armell." The *Illustrated History of Dane County*, gives the name as "Oliver Emell," pp. 367, 369, 402.

saw a horse that had been stolen by Indians two weeks before, from Major Deviese at his Diggings in Exeter. On his way to the place where he then lived, which was near Beloit, he gave the Major such information as enabled him to recover his horse. He had come from Fort Winnebago to inform the Indians of a council to be held at that Fort on the twelfth of August.

In 1836 Armel was still a resident on the site of Madison, and joined John De La Ronde who had come from Portage to buy deer skins, and seven other Frenchmen in celebrating the Fourth of July.[1] Independence Day, then, was here first commemorated by eight foreigners. The next year Armel was living on the east shore of First Lake.

The written story of Armel as established within the limits of Madison, we owe to Dr. Chapman.[2] He seems to have derived it from James Halpin, one of the soldiers who arrested the deserters, and who was years afterwards an employé in the Capitol.

The soldiers had ran away from the Fort in order to buy rum, and, as their post was forty miles distant, could hardly have known about Armel's saloon, had it not been an establishment of some permanence. Another fact points the same way. Five hundred Indians had resorted to the same point with the thirsty soldiers, and that for the same purpose.

In some cities the first thing built has been a temple, or altar, or palace, or hospital, or fort; but our first building was a grog-shop — a humiliating confession — albeit a thousand places must make the same. One is reminded of Darwinians tracing man up, or down, to the monkey.

An American cent of 1798, and several Spanish silver coins, picked up in 1880 in Sorenson's garden, may have been lost by the intoxicated soldiers, and possibly mark the very spot where Armel had fixed his market with the aborigines.[3]

---

[1] *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, VII., 360.

[2] Ibid, iv., p. 347.

[3] Madison *State Journal*, April 26, 1880.

It is noteworthy that our earliest knowledge of the Madisonian locality is connected with a military establishment. Capt. Low and the privates who there seized the run-aways, came from a United States post.

The relation of the army to the progress of settlement has not been appreciated. In 1883, when the Northern Pacific was opened, army officers in the wide West bitterly complained to me that everybody was extolled to the skies except the military.

"Yet," said Gen. Morrow, chief marshal at Portland, "the army downward from Capts. Lewis and Clark, in 1804, explored and conquered the whole country from the Alleghanies to the Pacific. The army has surveyed routes, constructed military roads, protected railroad engineers and workmen, given them medicines, surgeons, refuge in forts; in every way it has been an entering wedge,—sword and shield to civilians. Its emblem is St. George slaying the dragon."

A similar boast might be made by military men regarding the founding of Wisconsin. Government forts heralded its birth, and cradled its infancy. In 1816, forts were established at Chicago and Prairie du Chien, the next year at Green Bay, in 1819 at Rock Island, in 1822 near St. Paul, and, in 1828, at the portage between the Fox and Wisconsin Rivers. Thus strong-holds and soldiers, north, south, east and west, were pillars of cloud by day and of fire by night, to guide, cheer, and save pioneers into the *terra incognita* of Wisconsin.

The frontier services of the army have been undervalued; but the fault may lie with frontier officers. Had half those gentlemen been as careful to write out their experiences as Lewis and Clark were, even when drenched with rain, or when ink was freezing, the world would have known by heart the merits of the military. The pen is mightier than the sword.

Armel was a fur-trader. What but furs could the Indians bring him which he could send to the whisky market, and obtain the supplies he most needed for sale? But the furs which Armel sought must always have abounded in Madisonian regions; and one Frenchman, John Nicolet, had pene-

trated to Wisconsin in quest of furs as early as 1634. There is then nothing incredible — perhaps nothing improbable — in the assertion, that some Frenchmen must have reached Madison and built fur-factories there a century ago, or a century before Armel arrived there. That point must have been the more attractive, thanks to fish from the lakes, sugar-trees on their shores, and a short portage by way of Pheasant Creek or Branch to the Wisconsin river. Canoes often needed no portage between those waters, as Gov. Dodge was informed.

Regarding the attractiveness of the Four Lake country to Frenchmen long ago, I have met with an unexpected fact which countenances my theory, that Frenchmen made their way to this nook of paradise at a very early date. Since commencing this paper, I have fallen in with the name of one Frenchman who was no doubt on the Four Lakes before Armel was born, and possibly made his home here. This man's name was Le Sellier, the French for Saddler, an old French *engagé*, who was enlisted by Maj. Long as a guide in 1823 from Chicago to Prairie du Chien, "because he had lived over thirty years with the Indians, had taken a Winnebago wife, and settled on the head-waters of Rock river." Le Sellier's dwelling is as likely to have been on Mendota as on Koshkonong[1] — and that one hundred years ago. It is more than sixty years since he served as Long's guide, and he had already been in this country more than thirty years. In the lowest deep I hope for a lower deep.

But, however it may have been with French adventurers, no man with Anglo-Saxon blood has been discovered to have planted himself in the Four Lake country so early as the Frenchman Armel, and few are known to have traveled it before his era.

The first of those few, so far as I know, was Ebenezer Brigham, the earliest known Yankee inhabitant of Dane county. The lead mine which he opened in 1828, was near its western boundary. In that same year he made, with two companions, an expedition to Portage. The object of this

[1] *Keating*, i., p. 173.

journey was to ascertain whether he could not export lead, as well as procure the flour and other things he needed, to better advantage in Portage than in Galena. His route thither, that is to Fort Winnebago, ran to the north-west of Fourth Lake, and he obtained from the army sutler a modicum of bread, pork and powder. His return course was more southerly, so as to strike the Indian trail which ran between Third and Fourth lakes, crossing both the Capitol and the University hills. Mr. Brigham's visit to Portage must have been late in 1828, for the fort there was not established till the 7th of October in that year. Possibly, however, his discovery of the Madisonian site did not occur till the year following, 1829. His account-books show that his mining begun on June 23rd, 1828.

He made the following statement as early as 1845, to H. A. Tenney, who has furnished it to me in writing: "He reached the hill on which Madison is mainly located, on the afternoon of the day he left the Fort, and set up his tent of blankets within the limits of the present Capitol park, near, as he pointed out to me, the eastern gate-way, as nearly as he could recall the spot. The site was at the time an open prairie, on which grew a few dwarf oaks, while thickets covered the lower grounds. Struck with the strange beauty of the place, he predicted that a village or a city would in time grow up there, and it might be the capital of a State. This, he informed me, was in May, eight years before Wisconsin became a Territory in 1836."

It is easy to see why the Four Lake country was not earlier visited by whites, although the Wisconsin river downward from the voyage of Marquette had been a thoroughfare. The truth is, that, at first, canoes were the only conveyances known. It was some generations after Marquette's mission, before the Indians of the North-West obtained ponies of the Spaniards. Wisconsin way-farers, who had no canoes, afterward walked near the old water-route; and there, too, the first military road from the Fort at Portage to Prairie du Chien was laid out.

Mr. Brigham died in Madison, and lies buried in its Forest

Hill cemetery. I love to think of him as closing his eyes on earth amid the lovely lakes he had been perhaps the first of his race to discover, thirty-three years before, and as buried on a hill which overlooks the church for building which he gave the first thousand dollars, and the city that, as a member of the Territorial Council, he did so much to found. As he was a Puritan Pilgrim, his monument is with special fitness a massive and monolithic obelisk of granite from his native Massachusetts. A gun carried by one of his ancestors in King Philip's war, is among the relics in the Wisconsin Historical Society.

After Brigham's turning aside to the Four Lakes in 1828, I know of no other white visitors till May in the following year. At that time Judge Doty, who had in each of the four previous years passed from Green Bay to Prairie du Chien by water, made the same journey on horse back. His companion was Morgan L. Martin. They had with them a Menomonee Indian guide with a pack-horse, and a young half-blood Menomonee. They were conducted on their return between Second and Third Lakes, and then between Wingra and Third, and so west and north to Portage.[1] They had heard of the Lake country, and desired to inspect it.[2]

Here Doty by locating the capitol of a future State, was to perpetuate his memory. In Saint Paul's at London, amid

[1] The itinerary of the Doty explorers will always grow in interest. It was as follows: On the east side of Fox River and Lake Winnebago to an Indian village on the present site of Fond du Lac; thence to another such village on Rock River near Waupun; to another on Green Lake prairie; to another on the east side of Third Lake, and so to McCrary's furnace south-west of Blue Mounds. Returning they came from Blue Mounds to Fourth Lake, thence by way of Fort Winnebago to Butte des Morts. Ferried over the Fox River there, and swimming their horses, they followed on the west side of Lake Winnebago the trail to Green Bay. So states a Ms. letter of Morgan L. Martin, in 1885.

[2] Mr. Durrie, in his *History of Madison*, p., 17, supposed that Henry S. Baird came to the site of Madison with Doty and Martin. He must, however, have been misinformed, as I have a statement from Martin himself that Baird was not with him on his first visit to the Four Lakes.

statuary and bass-reliefs without number, I look at nothing so long as at the narrow tablet over the north side-door inscribed with the name of the architect of the pile, and the words which have become world-famous, namely — "*Lector, si monumentum requiris, circumspice!*" [1]—Reader, if you seek his monument, look around. However carefully Saint Paul's may be guarded from Irish dynamiters, it must at least crumble and tumble, its very stones gray and death-like old; but long after that catastrophe, when strangers here ask for Doty's monument, it will be answer enough to say—*Look around!*

North of Fourth Lake, and south of Third, the Doty band saw Winnebago villages; but none between those waters. Not one white face was met between Green Bay and Blue Mounds.

The next visitor at the site of Madison appears to have been Jefferson Davis. Mr. Davis writes me as follows:

"While on detached service in the summer of 1829 I think I encamped one night about [on] the site of Madison. The nearest Indian village was on the opposite side of the lake. Nothing, as I think, was known to the garrison of Fort Winnebago about the Four Lakes before I saw them. Indeed, sir, it may astonish you to learn, in view of the [now] densely populated condition of that country, that I and the file of soldiers who accompanied me were the first white men who ever passed over the country between the Portage of the Wisconsin and Fox rivers, and the then village of Chicago. Fish and water-fowl were abundant; deer and pheasants less plentiful. The Indians subsisted largely on Indian corn and wild rice. When sent out on various expeditions, I crossed Rock river at different points; but saw no sign of settlement above Dixon's Ferry." [2] That point had been occupied by a white man only one year.

In August, 1829, William Deviese, already mining at Exeter, near the south line of Dane county, in quest of the

[1] It is odd that the last of the Latin words means something in English. It naturally forms four English words, namely—"*Sir-come-spy-see!*"

[2] MS. letter, Beauvoir, Miss., 23d Feb., 1885.

horse stolen from him by Indians, as already mentioned, was near the site of Madison. What he sought he found, on the west side of Third or the "upper" lake as he terms it — surviving to tell the story in 1885.

Within two years after the Green Bay men came hither prospecting, though not as miners, Abel Rasdall, a Kentuckian, coming from Galena in 1831, commenced his trading adventures around the Four Lakes. His cabin was on First Lake, on the eastern shore, about half a mile north[1] of its outlet. His wife was a squaw, who, some years afterward, when her tribe went west, decided to go with them. So she and her husband concluded an amicable separation in less time than is needed even when the proclamation is, "Twenty minutes for dinner and Chicago divorces." Rasdall and his partner cut a blanket in two, and each kept half of it. Thus were they put asunder. This blanket-cutting recalls the English custom at betrothals and hand-fasts, of breaking in two a bit of money, each party retaining a portion. So in Scott's Bride of Lammermoor, the troth-plight of the Master of Ravenswood and Lucy Ashton "ended in the emblematic ceremony of their breaking betwixt them a thin broad piece of gold."

Another Indian trader, Wallace Rowan, was established at the head of Fourth Lake, at the out-break of the Black Hawk war in 1832. It is not impossible that he was trading there before the coming of either Rasdall, or even Armel. His wife was a white woman, and the first one known to have pilgrimed into this new country. In 1835, Rowan entered fifty-two acres of land on the eastern shore of Monona — a fractional farm which included Squaw, or Strawberry Point.

As early as 1833, Rowan's trading-post, about three-fourths of a mile north of the village of Pheasant Branch, had passed into the hands of Michel St. Cyr, a Canadian half-breed. This frontiersman, as will be seen in the sequel, proved a link that could not well have been spared in the chain of events which drew Madison in its train.

[1] I write *north*, though Durrie, p. 24, says south. My informant was Simeon Mills, who had often visited the dwelling of Rasdall.

Near the abode of Rowan and St. Cyr, Col. Dodge, and Henry Gratiot, Indian agent, backed up by fifty armed horsemen from the Mines, on the 25th of May, 1832, held a council with the Winnebagoes, and induced that tribe to pledge themselves to remain neutral in the impending contest. That site is also memorable for other events to be mentioned hereafter, and Capt. Brown's Illinois Rangers lay encamped there some days in the summer of 1833.

The last spot where Black Hawk's force halted was on the site of Madison, and they are said to have thrown up a brush or log breast-work on University Hill. But they retreated towards the Wisconsin River as soon as they ascertained that the Americans were advancing from Koshkonong. The main camp of the whites on the night of July 20th, 1832, was ten miles east of Madison. Their advance-guard pushed ahead seven miles further, and passed the night "about a quarter of a mile north of the north-east end of Third Lake."[1] The next morning, starting early, they crossed the Catfish near where the Williamson street bridge now stands, before eight o'clock. Pushing on they discovered a solitary savage seated near the shore of Third Lake, a little east of the foot of King street. Suspecting him to be connected with some ambush, they shot him at once. This precipitation they afterwards regretted, and the more since they observed that he was lying on an Indian grave. The main American army was but two miles behind, and traversing Madison from east to west, "almost precisely over the ground that the capitol now stands upon," overtook no enemies in force till they approached the Wisconsin River.

A man who was passing two months afterward to that river from Fourth Lake, says the trails of the Indians were still distinct, sometimes they would all converge into a broad and plain path, and then radiate in different directions dwindling to a mere trace.[2] This method of travel was adopted in order to deceive pursuers in regard to their true route, and also to help them escape in case of attack.

[1] Ms. letter of Peter Parkinson, one of the advance.

[2] *Hesperian*, ii, p. 269.

In 1835, Thomas W. Sutherland, a young Philadelphia lawyer, floated down the Mississippi from the Falls of St. Anthony, in a skiff, to the mouth of Rock River, and paddled up that stream and the Catfish, to the spot where Madison is now built. His father, through the United States surveyor, had secured lands in the vicinity. Young Sutherland spent some time in an Indian camp at Winnequah, on the east side of Lake Monona — opposite the capitol. He became an early settler in Madison, and was elected the first President of the village council, and the first Secretary of the Wisconsin Historical Society.

Of the first comers to the Four Lakes, Armel, St. Cyr, and other half-breeds or French of their type, would have roamed or reveled there all the same had the old French *regime* that ended in 1763 still continued.

It was otherwise with Anglo-Saxon pioneers like Rasdall, and especially Brigham, — men who removed hither in order to develop the country by persistent toil, in farming, mining or other occupations of civilized life. Movements or events, favoring the entrance of such settlers into the North-West, may be traced back a long way, and they are worth tracing.

Downward from 1783, the region was by treaty a part of the United States; but the forts — which were its keys — were not delivered up by the British till near the close of the eighteenth century, in 1796. Then treaties with Indians were needed. Six of them were made within three decades, in the years 1804, 1816, 1825, 1827, 1828, and 1829. It was necessary to enforce those compacts by war with Red Bird, and especially afterward with Black Hawk, before a settler could open a farm, and yet not lose his scalp.

The earliest Anglo-Saxon adventurers to Wisconsin, however, were not farmers but miners. Lead mines, near the corner where Wisconsin, Illinois, and Iowa meet together, were known to the early French. They were worked after a fashion by the Indians. They remain to this day the seat of all[1] lead mining in the United States, except Leadville

[1] *United States Census Compendium*, p. 1,238.

and places like it, where lead is a subordinate element in the ore. Mines of a metal so important, and those so nearly unique, were naturally a strong attraction.

This industry took a swift expansion as soon as steamers had free course on the Upper Mississippi. It was in 1824, that the first steam-paddles reached Prairie du Chien; and in the fifth year thereafter, 1829, the lead harvest at Galena, where seven years before only one house was standing, amounted to twelve million pounds. The Diggings of McNutt, afterwards called Kemp and Collins, and those of Brigham,— both in or near Dane county — had been started in 1828, the very next year after the capture of Red Bird had made prospectors safe there.

Miners need food and shelter. Those from Southern Illinois went home to winter; those from the east could not, but dodged the cold in such dug-outs as they could hurry up. The eastern men were hence nicknamed *Badgers*, as if burrowing in similar holes with those animals. This jocose appellation became the badge of all the Wisconsin tribe; and it will remain indelible forever.[1] Farmers and lumbermen soon sprang up. Natives became jealous and hostile.[2] An irrepressible conflict ensued. The result was the survival of the fittest. Lead, lurking in the mine, killed the Indians as inevitably as it ever did when moulded into rifle bullets.

[1] Regarding the sobriquet, *Badger*, there is a ludicrous etymological blunder in Meyer's *German Hand-Book*, though it is in the main a most trust-worthy Gazetteer. Meyer, aware that the badger hoards grain, and mentioning that that animal's Latin name is *Frumentarius*, that is, the corn commissary, says that Wisconsin, being fertile in corn, is called the Badger State, because farmers there lay up corn after the manner of the badgers. Had Meyer moved among Wisconsin pioneers, he would have heard them styled Badgers before they had begun to raise corn. There is a similar anachronism in saying, as many do, that Dane county was so named because the Scandinavian element is there so large. The truth is, that county was called Dane before one single Dane had made his home upon its acres.

[2] William Devicse, while prospecting or mining near the south line of Dane county, in 1829 and onward, had six or seven horses stolen from him by Indians, and also many mining tools. Yet he did not think that the natives had any more dislike to him than to others of his class.

The long and short of the Black Hawk war was chasing that chief and his four hundred braves, who had crossed the Mississippi from Iowa, near the mouth of Rock river, up that water to Koshkonong, and thence by way of the Four Lakes and the Wisconsin river, back to Iowa. In this chase, the whites — mainly farmers' boys — each picked out for himself a good farm.[2]

As soon as soldiering was over, many a youth made haste to break up his land, bringing with him, or soon after, the girl he had left behind him when he marched to the frontier. Such, in a nutshell, is the Genesis and Exodus, — the rise and progress — the whole history of Wisconsin.

Eastern men are said to come west with a view to grow up with the country. Some of them thus migrated in the hope of carving out States in quite another form than that now existing. About 1825, enterprising settlers had planted themselves in Green Bay, sanguine that a vast State, called Superior, was about to be born, with Green Bay as its natural capital. Such anticipations were a "hatching of vain empires." But they would have been reasonable, had not Congress, robbing Peter to pay Paul, transferred the grand Northern Peninsula to Michigan, and thus kept her from fighting with Ohio for the swamps around Toledo.

Roads were demanded to facilitate settlement. A military road from Prairie du Chien to Portage was laid out by Gov. Doty, as United States Commissioner in 1830; and soldiers in the garrisons at both places were set at work for constructing that thorough-fare. Thus the road-raising army brought more civilization into Wisconsin by plow-shares than by swords. In the day of small things, its high-ways were as invaluable as any rail-way has been since. The track of the

[2] The discovery of excellent prairies and oak openings through all the breadth of Wisconsin was a surprise to the volunteers. It had long been reported by fur traders, whose interests were adverse to agriculture, that Wisconsin was in the main a great Dismal Swamp, and so the myth concerning a great American Desert still found its local habitation on the east side of the Mississippi. It was long the purpose at Washington to reserve the region now Wisconsin for an Indian Territory. With this view various tribes were removed thither from New York.

Northwestern Rail-way west ward from Mount Horeb station, for twenty miles or more, is now laid on the line of the Doty military road.

Traversing rough regions on military causeways, I have often said, as the Irishman did concerning the officer who made the Scotch highlands carriageable—

> "If you had seen these roads before they were made,
> You would lift up both hands and bless General Wade,"

The United States survey of the Four Lake country was not accomplished till the last days of the year 1834. The field-notes of the surveyors are still preserved in the vault of the Land Office in the capitol. In a little volume, No. 82, about six inches by four—a stoutly bound pocket-book—I have examined the field-notes regarding the then unsuspected site of State Government—a plot of ground described as T. 7, R. 9 E., of 4 P. M.—that is, township seven north of south State line, and range nine east, of the fourth principal meridian. When Madison has an illustrated history, the surveyor's plotting will be reproduced in fac simile.

Friday ought never to be counted a day of ill omen in Madison, for on that day the work of surveying was begun there. That Friday was the fourth of December, 1834. The measurement of what is now the Capitol Square was, however, made on Sunday. The surveyor was Orson Lyon. On one of his pages, Third and Fourth Lakes are plotted. Between Third and Wingra, called a pond, a line is drawn and inscribed ("Indian trail.") It runs northwest to Fourth Lake, striking it in section eighteen.

North-west of Fourth Lake, the military road appears with the legend "Mitchell's field, 14 chains; dwelling and trading-house." The name "Mitchell" perplexed me not a little, till Dr. Draper suggested that it was the surveyor's name for St. Cyr, whose Christian name I found to be *Michel*, the French form of Michael.

The surveyor notes that he set a post on the north side of Third Lake, between sections twenty-three and twenty-four, with bearing-trees, a hickory eighteen inches in diameter, north thirty degrees, east fifty-two links, and a burr-oak of

eleven inches, north fifty-three west, forty-six links. Two years afterwards this section-post became historic. Still more notable was the post where sections fourteen, fifteen, twenty-four and twenty three corner, for it stood just beneath the main western threshold of the present Capitol of Wisconsin. Its bearing-trees were a white oak of twenty-two inches diameter, seventy-eight degrees southeast, sixty-one links and a burr-oak seventeen inches diameter, forty degrees south-west, sixty-nine links. Far nobler were these monarchs of the forest than any that now survive there.

The surveyor's Madisonian remarks are: "Land rolling and, except marsh, second rate, timbered with white, black and burr-oak, under-growth the same. The lakes shallow, the larger with one perpendicular bluff about sixty feet high, and about two hundred acres of sugar trees."

The surveyor's impressions of the region were more favorable than those of Wakefield, the Illinois soldier, who two years before had passed through it in chase of Black Hawk, and who wrote:

"If these Lakes were any where else except in the country they are, they would be considered among the wonders of the world. But the country they are situated in is not fit for any civilized nation of people to inhabit. It appears that the Almighty intended it for the children of the forest."

Our rectangular surveys, with measurements as certain as the courses of the stars, stand in strange contrast with the uncertainties of all past ages concerning metes and bounds. Owing to such uncertainties, English parishes were perambulated every Spring on the so-called gang-day. Magistrates, priests and people, girls bearing gang-flowers, walked in procession along boundary lines. Psalms were chanted. Beneath gospel-trees, so styled, Holy Writ was read. If disputes arose as to any boundary, the point was decided by the dignitaries present, a land-mark was set, and frequently a boy was flogged on the spot, to the end that his memory of it might become more tenacious. Something was, however, paid to such a mnemonic sufferer. Four shil-

lings of such smart-money, I see, to have been paid in one parish, in the year 1679. In 1651 Capt. Keen and seven others were chosen to go "the bounds of Boston in perambulation betwixt it and the towns around."[1]

Judge Doty has already been described as prospecting upon Second, Third and Fourth lakes in 1829, as early as May,—that is more than five years before the Government survey of that land took place. The land office at Green Bay was opened in 1835. In October of that year, Doty entered one hundred acres in T. 7, R. 9, S. E. ¼ of section 12. He thus became owner of the water power on the Catfish, the value of which he over-rated. The Government price of land was then $1.25 per acre.

In January following, he was trying to organize a company of twelve, each partner contributing a hundred dollars, for purchasing land on the Four Lakes in order to take advantage of the water privileges. Early in the same year he raised his aims higher, and in Gov. Mason, of Michigan, he found an associate with money. Thus he was enabled, on the sixth of April, 1836, to enter on the Madison site about a thousand acres for Mason,[2] and two hundred and sixty-one for himself. He was empowered by Mason and another buyer in the same tract, to use and dispose of their land as should seem to him best. He thus became the plenipotentiary over a sort of blind pool covering more than two square miles between Third and Fourth lakes.

He was not without rivals. In June or July of this same year, 1836, the so-called "City of the Four Lakes" was founded near Livesey's Spring, on the site of the trading post

---

[1] *Record Commission*, Doc. 46, p. 106.

[2] Stevens Thompson Mason, born in Virginia in 1811—at the age of twenty was appointed by President Jackson, Secretary of the Territory of Michigan, which then included Wisconsin—and in August of the same year, 1831, he became Acting Governor over that vast region, on the transfer of Gov. Cass to the War Department in Washington. He continued in this office until Michigan became a State in 1837, and was then unanimously elected its first Governor, and was re-elected. He is celebrated in law books as an "infant" office-holder, and deserves fame on the higher ground of having an old head on his young shoulders.

then occupied by St. Cyr, and before him by Rowan. It was laid out not only on paper, but on *terra firma*, by the surveyors of M. L. Martin and Col. W. B. Slaughter. But, as it turned out, all investors there were laid out too, and that so cold and stiff that they never rose again. The earth hath bubbles as the water hath, and Four Lake City was of them—the baseless fabric of a vision.

In the Autumn of 1836, Doty proceeded to commence a city on the land of which he had acquired control. For this purpose he was on the ground early in October. He brought little baggage, except a green shawl and a shot-gun. He was, however, accompanied by a surveyor with chain and compass. The twain—a modern Romulus and Remus—were assisted in the day and lodged at night by the half breed St. Cyr. In the course of three days they had completed all the meanders and measurements that were necessary for drawing the plat of the embryo city—a site which Doty began at once to talk of to his engineer as bound by manifest destiny to become the Wisconsin capital.

As soon as meager field-notes had been finished at the Four Lakes, Doty hurried sixty miles west to Belmont, where the Territorial Legislature was already in session. His plan of a capital—borrowed in some particulars from that of Washington—and embodying all the characteristic features of Madison to-day, was soon in readiness. Every hamlet in Wisconsin was its own first choice for the metropolis, as every Greek officer voted for himself as having done the best service against Xerxes; and the claims of a dozen sites, not yet settled at all, were urged by land speculators, of whom Doty was chief. He came off conqueror over all competitors. His success was largely due to his "one man power," or absolute control over all the acres he would have the Legislators delight to honor. When he took them up into the mount of temptation, showing them corner lots with the glory of them, and saying, "All these things will I give you!" it was well known that his were not the promises of the Father of Lies. His chain of title was perfect, and his title deeds beyond suspicion, needing no warranty.

Some rivals may have had as liberal souls as his was; but none of them had as much soil to give.

President Hayes is charged with loving his enemies better than his friends. Being sure of friends, he used patronage to make sure of enemies. This policy has an awkward resemblance to that of a certain religious sect, the Yezidees, who worship only Satan, and that to disarm his enmity. Doty lived before the reign of Hayes, and probably knew nothing about the devil-worshipers; but he instinctively worked upon their system. He lavished everything not to reward friends — he was sure of them — but to win over foes, believing, with Walpole, that they had their price. His advances were re-buffed by Gen. Dodge; but perhaps not by the General's son. At all events they were in general graciously received. Accordingly the majority took the Doty lots, and did his bidding. They were well paid, one of them receiving the whole block on which the State Bank stands.

If disturbed by compunctious visitings from within or from without, our Solons may have defended themselves like Lord Bacon, who, when convicted of taking bribes, cried out, "I have sold justice — not injustice." So our bribe-bought Legislators might plead that they fixed our capital in the best possible place, and that the wisdom of their choice is demonstrated by a half century of experience. The profit which they found while making the best choice would have lain in their path whatever choice they had made; and they may have compared that streak of luck to the strange good fortune of the mother of Moses, when she was paid wages for nursing her own child by Pharaoh's daughter.[1]

It was on the 28th of November, 1836, that the final vote

[1] The facts regarding the location of the Wisconsin seat of government at Madison, I have endeavored to state as I find them in histories, as Durrie, p. 46, and the Western Historical Company's, p. 666, as well as in the stories of some lookers-on in Belmont who still survive. I would like to believe that Doty in his lobbying, while daring to do all that might become a man and a statesman, dared do nothing more. Whether he did or did not, is a question on which it would be idle to hope that partisans can ever agree.

was passed which settled the Territorial, and hence the State, Capitol, on its present site; or, in the words of the act, which was carried by a majority of fifteen to eleven, "the seat of government was located and established in the township of Madison," on the corners of four specified sections.

It is in this Legislative act that the name *Madison*, so far as I know, appears for the first time. That name was no doubt picked out by Doty, and inscribed on the paper plan of that city of the future with which he had captivated and captured the ruling powers of the region,—a Territory which at that time showed a population of 11,683.[1]

Had two of the Legislative majority cast their ballots otherwise, the vote would have stood thirteen to thirteen. It would seem then, that Doty was economical after all, and tampered with only one or two more voters than were needful for carrying his point. It was remarked that scarcely one of the bribed members ever made much money by selling either himself or the Doty lots,—a fact which may be construed as a Providential rebuke of official corruption.

The first visitor known to me at the spot which had thus been constituted the local habitation of Territorial government, was Moses M. Strong. His first arrival at the site where Madison was to stand, I do not discover on record in any book, but I relate the story as it came to me from his own lips:

Soon after New Year's in 1837, Mr. Strong was returning from Milwaukee to Mineral Point. The direct route lay south of the Four Lakes; but he with two friends turned aside with a view to inspect the spot which had just been fixed upon as the Wisconsin head-center. Having lodged and eaten muskrat and squaw-bread at a French trader's on First Lake, they pushed on north, crossed Third Lake on the ice, tied their horses, and sought for a section post. As they had brought with them, if not a copy of the surveyor's field-notes, at least a sectional map, they were not long in

[1] It does not appear that Gov. Doty ever met President Madison; but he knew his widow very well, and spoke of her, Madam Dolly, with so much love and admiration that he may be thought to have given Madison its name through a desire to do her honor.

finding the bearing-trees, the hickory and the burr-oak already mentioned, and which guided them to the square four inch post they were seeking.

The compass,—the *vade mecum* of every pioneer,—enabled the prospectors to follow the blazed trees on the surveyor's course from the section post up the Capitol Hill along the line of the future King street, till they arrived at the post marking the corners of sections thirteen, fourteen, twenty-three and twenty-four,—a monument which a classical writer would style the *Milliarium aureum* of Wisconsin. A wisp of hay twisted around the limb of a tree showed that some human pilgrim had halted there already, and wished to leave a trace of his presence. No man or mortal, beast or bird, was, however, visible. The day was cold, the snow deep. So, after a brief halt, the explorers went on across Fourth Lake on the ice, purposing to spend the night at the cabin of St. Cyr. But it was very dark before they reached the shore, and no sign could be detected of the haven of their hope, or even of the military road. Coming at length where an oak had been blown down, they kindled a fire of the dry branches, between two huge limbs and rolled themselves each in his blanket, beside its trunk. They passed the night, one of the three being up all the time, and at work with the hatchet to keep the fire agoing. They lay without shelter or food, save a remnant of bread and pork, but no water or even whisky.

Day-light revealed, after two hours' wandering, the way to Blue Mounds, where they felt at home. Houseless wanderers find the earth a cold bed in Winter. One experiment, sometimes tried by Strong, gave him what he needed. After supper he would push his camp-fire a rod away from where it had been built. By this change of base he secured a dry and warm, though fire blackened, mattress for spreading his blankets. No warming pan could be better.

The next month, February, 1837, Mr. Strong and John Catlin were employed to survey and stake out the lots around the Capitol square. They came from the west in a sleigh with a driver. Their base of operations was the log cabin of St. Cyr. Deep snow and snow-storms sometimes drove

them back there from their field of labor, for forage, potatoes, salt and shelter. For these supplies they paid their entertainer thirteen dollars and a half. Yet their camping ground was usually among the ridges between Wingra and Third Lake. In about a week—that is on Feb. 26th, 1837, the task of meandering and lot-staking was done, so far as it was practicable on deep snow, and ground frozen still deeper.

The last night of this survey, Mr. Strong's party lodged near where the steam-boat landing on Fourth Lake now is. They had no tent, but lay in blankets; and thanks to a tremendous snow-fall, were buried more than a foot deep. The storm still continuing in the morning, they gave up further work as fruitless, and drove off in their sleigh on the Lake. The air was thick with snow—nothing could be seen in any direction—the driver lost his head and his way. But at starting, Mr. Strong had observed that the wind had struck his right cheek when the horses were headed as the compass showed they ought to go. Hence, taking the reins, he turned the horses till the wind struck his face as in the beginning. Thus with no other guide than the way the wind came, he at length brought his team and passengers to the half-breed hut, then the only refuge within possible reach.

Thus, the Four Lake country gave place to Madison, and here the task assigned me also finds its conclusion. You all know what has followed here in the fifty years save two which have since elapsed.

If I were to cross the Madisonian threshold, I should be led on so far, that you would compare my paper to the endless rope which an Irishman pulled and pulled till he was tired, and then broke out with an oath, swearing the other end of the pesky thing had been cut off.

* * * * * * * * * * * *

It may be worth adding, that the foregoing sketch is based upon conversations with Gov. Doty, Gen. Mills, Hon. Moses M. Strong, Dr. L. C. Draper, and others; on the standard histories of Madison or Dane county by Durrie, Park, Western Historical Company, and Smith; on correspondence with D.

J. Pulling Morgan L. Martin, Jefferson Davis, Hollis Crocker, H. A. Tenney, Peter Parkinson, G. W. Jones; and on gleanings from various maps, books and newspapers in the Library of the State Historical Society, and especially the nine volumes of its *Historical Collections*, the works of Featherstonhaugh, Wakefield, Keating, etc.